

Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership

Annual report
2023-24



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Overview

The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership was established in 2021. We are a collaborative effort to build a more equitable region that offers opportunities for all individuals in the county.

We are a partnership that brings together Members from various organisations across the county including employers, businesses, education, community groups, and the public sector.

We have a Charter which we launched in January 2023 which helps organisations to embed social value into their operations to work to improve lives of our residents.

Our aim is to work together to create opportunities and benefits for all people within the county. Our work supports the delivery of the outcomes of the **Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development** in Oxfordshire, which all councils have adopted. We do this by sharing knowledge, expertise and resources, and creating links between different areas of work.

Partnership working is instrumental to our success, expanding our reach and unlocking access to a breadth of resources and diverse networks that exceed the scope of any individual organisation, fortifying our collective capacity for impactful and sustainable change. We are grateful for the collective drive of our partnership organisations

that deliver significant resource in support of the Partnership's aims.

We are focused on four areas to deliver our vision: education, employment, social value and procurement, and place shaping.

We aim to work with projects across Oxfordshire that the OIEP can support and grow or amplify their work. We are also building a repository of resources, case studies and signposting to support organisations working towards a more inclusive economy.

This report gives an overview of OIEP and highlights progress so far.

The report also identifies key stakeholders and assesses the effectiveness of the governance and methods utilised by the partnership.

~~We conclude that the partnership is strong and valuable and has successfully leveraged additional resources from several sources, and that it needs a continued, diversified and enlarged funding settlement in order to support the development of a more inclusive economy in Oxfordshire.~~



EDUCATION



EMPLOYMENT



SOCIAL VALUE
& PROCUREMENT



PLACE SHAPING



Highlights of our year



100+
OEIP charter
signees



1000+ hours
and priceless expertise
contributed by our partners
to partnership work



businesses advertising
vacancies through
HM Bullingdon prison
employment hub



25
refugees
provided with
job readiness
training



5
seminars
& workshops
delivered



c.£100,000
in kind research costs
from Policy Lab and SDG
Community Impact Fellows



15

businesses referred
to refugee support
programme



Our vision

Our aim is to work together to create a more equal region that creates opportunities and benefits for all people within the county.

Our focus is on tackling areas that really need attention, which will have impact and where we can make a real difference.

We work with projects across Oxfordshire that the partnership can support and help to grow or amplify their work as well as creating a repository of case studies, information and signposting related to the inclusive economy.

Supporting delivery of the Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development in Oxfordshire

The Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development in Oxfordshire sets out ambitions for what the county could be like by 2050. It has been adopted by each of the Oxfordshire Councils. The nine outcomes within the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision are ambitious - delivering them requires long-term collective commitment and investment by a wide array of strategic stakeholders and partners who make decisions about investment and placemaking across Oxfordshire.

The Partnership particularly focuses on the following three outcomes:

Outcome: Our residents will be healthier and

happier, and overall wellbeing will have improved

The OIEP improves skills and educational attainment for Oxfordshire residents, which in turn gives people access to employment opportunities.

Outcome: Our local economy will be globally competitive, sustainable, diverse and inclusive

The OIEP's education and inclusive employment working groups are working to create an environment and communities that can adapt to change, a region that is resilient in the face of shocks in the economy, and a workforce that responds to different needs and different kinds of work in the future.

Outcome: Our vibrant historic and cultural offer will be rich, diverse and enhanced

The OIEP's partners work together to create a more equal region that creates opportunities and benefits for all people within the county.



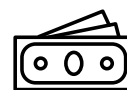
Our natural environment will be in a better state than that in which we found it



We will already be carbon neutral and accelerating towards a carbon negative future



Our residents will be healthier and happier, and overall wellbeing will have improved



Our local economy will be globally competitive, sustainable, diverse and inclusive



Our county will be a more equal, fair and inclusive place for everyone



Our vibrant historic and cultural offer will be rich, diverse and enhanced



We will have energy efficient homes in the right number, location and tenure



Our county's connectivity will be transformed in ways that enhance wellbeing



Our diverse and vibrant communities will thrive with a strong sense of identity

The nine outcomes of the Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development in Oxfordshire.

Our focus areas

We have set up four action focused working groups to deliver our vision:

- **Educational attainment:** Focusing on improving early years education, increasing the attainment of GCSE English and Maths, and strengthening links between businesses and education to better shape career opportunities.
- **Inclusive employment:** Supporting both employers and employees by helping organisations create pathways into work while addressing the barriers people face in accessing employment.
- **Social value and procurement:** Encouraging local spending, particularly by large public sector organisations like councils and universities, to reinvest in the local economy and create opportunities for local businesses.
- **Place shaping:** Investing in the areas that need it most and collaborate with local communities to ensure economic investments address key challenges in health, the environment, and housing.

Our stakeholders

OIEP has a broad and varied representation bringing expertise and knowledge from business, education, voluntary, community and public sector which enable us to develop and deliver our vision.

Steering Group

Abingdon & Witney College	Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action (OCVA)	Oxford University Hospitals Foundation Trust
Activate Learning	Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership (OSEP)	Oxfordshire County Council
Advanced Oxford	Oxford Academy	Oxfordshire Youth
Aspire	OxLEP	Prorsus
B4	Oxford Brookes University	RAW
Beard Construction	Oxford Bus Company	SOFEA
Blake Morgan	Oxford City Council	South Oxfordshire District Council
BMW Group	Oxford Civic Society	South Oxfordshire Food & Education Alliance
CBRE	Oxfordshire Deputy Lieutenant	Spacecraft Consulting
Cherwell District Council	Oxford Hub	Storey Consulting
Citizens Advice Bureau	Oxford Technology and Media Network	Unipart
DWP	Oxford United Community Foundation	University of Oxford
Federation of Small Businesses	Oxford University	Vale of White Horse District Council
Freeths		West Oxfordshire District Council
High Sheriff of Oxfordshire		
Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF)		

Educational attainment working group

Activate Learning	Magdalen College School	People/Growing Minds
Brookes University	OSEP	River Learning Trust
Community First Oxon	Oxford Civic Society	SOFEA
Freeths	Oxford Hub	St Christopher's Primary School
Homestart	Oxfordshire Youth	Trinity College

Inclusive employment working group

Aspire	Freeths	Oxford Innovation
B4B	Federation of Small Businesses	Oxford Technology and Media Network
Beard Construction	HMPPS	Oxwash
Blake Morgan	OSEP	Seetec Plus
Blenheim Palace	Owen Mumford	South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
Oxford Brookes University	OxLEP	Tap Social
CBRE	Oxford Artisan Distillery	Unipart
DWP	Oxford Civic Society	Voi
Explosive Learning Solutions	Oxford Health	
Europa School	Oxford Hub	
Fedcap		

Social value and procurement working group

Amey	Eiffage Kier Ferrovial BAM JV	Oxford Civic Society
Aspire	Explosive Learning	Oxford Hub
Blake Morgan	ODS	Oxfordshire County Council
Blenheim Palace	OSEP	RAW
Bouygues	OxH Foundation Trust OxLEP	SOHA
CAG Oxfordshire	Oxford City Council	University of Oxford

Place based working group

Adviza	Kellogg College	OxLEP
Archdeacon of Dorchester	Mind	OSEP
Aspire	OCVA	Research Oxford
CAG	OSEP	SOFEA
CANO	Oxford City Council	Prorus
Charity Mentors	Oxfordshire County Council	South Oxfordshire and Vale of
Cherwell District Council	Oxford Hub	White Horse District Councils
Community First Oxon	Oxfordshire Mind	University of Oxford
DWP		



Achievements

The OIEP charter

The Charter is at the heart of the OIEP's work. It drives progress towards the partnership's goals by uniting organisations around a shared commitment to creating a fairer, more inclusive economy.

We are delighted that more than 100 organisations, including all six of Oxfordshire's local authorities, Thames Valley Police, and OUH Foundation Trust, have now signed the Charter and are delivering against their commitments.

You can find a full list of Charter pledgers [here](#).

Signing the Charter demonstrates public accountability and motivates signatories to align their actions with its objectives, such as widening access to quality jobs, providing opportunities for

education and skills developments, and spending money locally. The Charter fosters collaboration among organisations, encouraging resource-sharing and joint initiatives while providing a framework for action with clear goals and best practices.

The OIEP continues to actively drive sign-ups to the Charter, encouraging organisations in Oxfordshire to align with and contribute to the delivery of the partnership's objectives.

Supporting Charter organisations

The OIEP works with each organisation throughout the 12 months providing bespoke support with the implementation of pledges dependent on requirements - this could be signposting to relevant information or buddying with an organisation that has already implemented that pledge.



The Charter



Company name: _____

We pledge to...

- Improve training and educational attainment**
 - create workplaces where employees can thrive and grow
 - support early years and school volunteer programmes
- Recruit inclusively**
 - make jobs accessible for all residents
 - hire from diverse communities
- Offer opportunities into work**
 - support those furthest from the labour market on their journey to secure employment
- Support local and social economy**
 - use our buying power to support the local economy
 - maximise social value
- Provide fair wages**
 - ensure employees have a fair local wage
- Share resources, skills and assets**
 - find practical ways to ensure goods and services are accessible to all

Signed:

Print name:

Date:

FOCUS AREA:

Educational attainment



The OIEP's work on improving educational attainment in the county currently focuses on supporting organisations that are making positive change, either directly or by connecting them with other organisations that can offer resources and support.

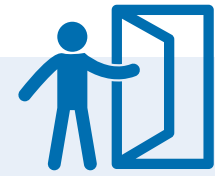
The partnership supported ARCh, a charity which helps Oxfordshire pupils with reading, with a successful application to OCF Step Change grant to fund a volunteer co-ordinator role for 12 months. The volunteer co-ordinator is now in place and has significantly expanded ARCh's capacity to recruit volunteers to support children with reading. The OIEP Charter also includes pledges for employers supporting employees to volunteer for ARCh.

The partnership also supports Growing Minds, an organisation improving school-readiness in Oxfordshire, using our network to raise the profile of the charity with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOBICB) as a preventative programme to avoid determinants of deprivation later on in life.

To build on this success, the OIEP is now working with partners including Oxfordshire County Council, University of Oxford, and BOBICB, to deliver an

'Early Years Summit' in early 2025. This summit will bring together leading academics, national experts, early years practitioners, and employers who recognise the importance of the issue, to share insights and evidence-based strategies that can empower organisations to make a meaningful impact in the lives of young children and their families.





FOCUS AREA:

Inclusive employment

The OIEP is tackling barriers to employment by facilitating knowledge sharing and creating networks of mutual support. This year the partnership's work has focussed on supporting three groups that face barriers to employment: prison leavers, refugees, and older people. We are now expanding our focus to include military and military families, young people, working with the unemployed, and care leavers.

The OIEP HR Network

The OIEP also established an HR Network in 2023 to engage with HR leads in businesses across the county to support its inclusive recruitment and employment goals by:

- sharing information and case studies on making an inclusive economy work in practice.
- providing opportunities to knowledge share and network.

The partnership have worked with this network to organize a programme of information sharing events.

Supporting prison leavers into employment

Having organised a successful HR network event on 'supporting prison leavers into employment' and a subsequent visit to HM Bullingdon Prison in 2023, the OIEP has been building on this work. The OIEP manager is now represented on HM Bullingdon Prison Employment Advisory Board.

As a direct outcome of this work, at least one organisation has reported employing a prison leaver for the first time, while others are in the process of amending their recruitment practices to support prison leavers.

We have also been working with HM Bullingdon prison to help them establish a 'departure lounge' in their visitors centre where immediately after release men can charge phones, contact DWP, Probation, or their GP, find out bus/train times and pick up some essentials like toiletries and clothes. OIEP have used their network to link HM Bullingdon with Getting Oxfordshire On-line who will be providing mobile phones and data, Voi technology who are providing discounts for use on their e-bikes and scooter, and Aston & James who will be providing winter coats.

Supporting refugees into employment

The partnership's hosted their second successful HR Network event in March 2024 on the theme of 'Supporting refugees into employment'. Speakers included Aspire, Oxford University Hospitals, and Asylum Welcome, and employees with lived experience. You can watch the recording [here](#) (please note, the first section was not recorded to protect the privacy of the speaker).

The OIEP worked in partnership to support the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to deliver the first in-person job readiness training for refugees, bringing together Asylum Welcome, Refugee Resources, Aspire, Oxford University and Oxfordshire County Council. The IRC hosted two events, for Hong Kong British National (Overseas) [BN(O)s] and for individuals supported by Refugee Resources.

The OIEP facilitated the first in-person refugee job readiness training session, for BN(O) from Hong Kong (faces anonymised to protect identities)

Having completed a successful Crankstart summer internship application, the partnership was pleased to work with a summer intern from Oxford University who created a toolkit for employers to create exceptional pathways for employing refugees and asylum seekers with the right to work.

Age friendly employment

The OIEP supported Age Without Limits' first 'Action Day', which aims to challenge the often narrow, negative and stereotypical way that older people and ageing is portrayed in our society.

Future events

The OIEP is planning further events to engage HR leads to support them in developing inclusive employment practices. Two events are currently planned for 2025 focusing on care-leavers and working with the unemployed.

Future events will focus on supporting military and military families, dealing with the cost-of-living crisis, and being an age friendly employer.



The OIEP facilitated the first in-person refugee job readiness training session, for BN(O) from Hong Kong (faces anonymised to protect identities)

FOCUS AREA:

Social value and procurement



The OIEP has played a central role in aligning approaches to social value and procurement across the county, fostering collaboration among local councils, universities, health institutions, and other key stakeholders.

The working group have established an anchor network subgroup to help co-ordinate the network's approach to building social value into their procurement practices.

They have also reviewed and consolidated local strategic plans and priorities with a view to ensuring alignment on social value policies and have developed high-level social value themes and outcomes for organisations to use in their work.

Development of a social value brokerage platform

The OIEP has secured funding from the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to develop a countywide

social value brokerage platform.

This platform will enable all contracting authorities, regardless of size, to incorporate social value into their contracts. Unlike a one-size-fits-all framework, it will offer flexibility for different authorities while providing a unified view of the countywide impact.¹

The platform will make it easier to embed social value practices across Oxfordshire, ensuring consistency while responding to the diverse needs and ambitions of local partners.

A specification for the platform is now being produced, with procurement anticipated in early 2025.

¹ A countywide social value brokerage platform is a tool or system that helps connect organisations (like councils, universities, and healthcare providers) with suppliers or contractors who can deliver extra benefits for the community alongside their main services.

For example, if a council hires a company to build a road, the platform could help ensure that the company also provides added value, like hiring local workers, offering apprenticeships, or supporting environmental projects.

This platform makes it easier for organisations to include social value in their contracts, even for smaller projects, and helps track the overall impact across the county. It acts like a matchmaking service, linking contracts to community benefits in a consistent and flexible way.



FOCUS AREA:

FOCUS AREA: Place based working

The OIEP provides partners with research and evidence to support work towards an inclusive economy.

The working group meetings have focussed on different topics, including successful examples of employment support in Oxfordshire, community hubs, and emerging issues regarding youth employment in Oxfordshire. The outputs of these discussions are used to generate examples and best practice for other organisations, and support the work of the other three OIEP working groups.

Impact measurement

The place based working group worked with OIEP partners to develop a logic model for OIEP, a tool to graphically represent how our objectives help us to reach our intended outcomes so that we can effectively target our work.

Research

The OIEP was pleased to have two students working on a research project to create a

framework for assessing the partnership's impact. This was an inaugural project of the Local Policy Lab, a new alliance between the University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University and Oxfordshire County Council.

The partnership also benefitted from research conducted by a student as part of the University of Oxford SDG Community Impact Fellows programme, who produced the report "Community based organisations – addressing the challenges and needs of community-based organisations". This report demonstrates the role community hubs play in delivering localised services, and what support they require to be effective.

Resource library for organisations

As part of the new website, the OIEP provides an extensive resource library for organisations working to make a more inclusive economy in the region.



Creating an Anchor network

System leaders have agreed on the impact anchor institutions like local authorities, NHS trusts, universities, trade unions, and large local businesses can have in creating an inclusive economy through their practices on pre-employment support, fair wages, social value and procurement, and climate action.²

This has led to the establishment of the Oxfordshire Anchor Network (OAN). As many of these priorities were already focus areas of the OIEP, it was agreed that the partnership would host the network. OIEP hosted a workshop in April with 60 leaders from across the system where the priorities and actions for the network were developed.

The OIEP has since hosted facilitated workshops to map out the next steps for these organisations to achieve the priorities that were agreed at the April workshop.

Facilitating knowledge sharing and mutual support

The partnership functions as a shared space for communication, collaboration, and mutual support. This year, the OIEP has organised a series of successful knowledge sharing seminars, providing our partners with access to experts in the field and supporting the development of inclusive initiatives in the county.

Workshop: exploring tools for sustainable and inclusive decision making

In February 2024, the OIEP hosted [a workshop with the Doughnut Economics Action Lab \(DEAL\)](#), exploring new tools for building a regenerative and distributive economy.

Expert speakers shared their insights and experiences, providing valuable knowledge to support policy and decision-makers working to create a more inclusive Oxfordshire. Participants explored different tools for measuring impact, including the 'doughnut economics' model.

Workshop: regional banking seminar

The partnership were pleased to host an in-person discussion with Jules Peck, founder and non-executive director of Avon Mutual, a pioneer in the UK's movement for community-owned regional banks. Regional banks aim to serve the financial needs of local citizens, community groups, and small businesses while promoting ethical investment and sustainable prosperity. At the event, partners

explored the benefits of regional banks and discussed how this would work in an Oxfordshire context.

Workshop: 'Do we need a local fund for social businesses?'

Start-up social businesses are often under-capitalised, and existing smaller-scale finance options are limited both locally and nationally. This lack of accessible financial resources has prompted innovative regional solutions, like Liverpool's **Kindred Fund**, who were invited to the event to share their experiences.

To support socially trading organisations in Oxfordshire, the [OIEP hosted an event in July 2024 to explore the potential for establishing a local fund dedicated to social businesses](#). The event brought together key stakeholders, social entrepreneurs, and community leaders to discuss the financing challenges faced by early-stage and growing social businesses and how a local funding model could bridge this gap.

The event, organised by Co-operative Futures, CAG Oxfordshire, OSEP, and Aspire, was part of a broader feasibility study into the creation of a local fund for socially trading businesses in Oxfordshire. The study seeks to identify the most viable models to ensure local businesses have access to finance that is supportive of their social and environmental missions.

Following the event, discussions have progressed on creating a social fund for Oxfordshire and a round table event with key stakeholders is planned for the new year.



² It was agreed that the climate priorities would be delivered through other existing organisations that are focussed on this work.

Raising the OIEP's profile

The OIEP manager, co-chairs, and partner organisations work to raise the profile of the Charter, and the work that Oxfordshire's businesses, councils, community groups and leaders are doing to create opportunities for the county's residents.

This year, they have attended several high-profile events to promote the partnership's work. The partnership hosted a panel session on "How can we collaborate to build a better economy that offers opportunities for all?" at B Corp's Louder than Words festival, which took place in Oxford in September 2024 and brought together over 2000 innovative organisations from across the UK.

The partnership were delighted to be featured in the University of Oxford's report 'Beyond Town and Gown – working to a more inclusive Oxford' as an exemplar initiative that is creating a more inclusive and sustainable county.

The OIEP co-chair [Baroness Jan Royall spoke at the opening of the House of Lords in July](#) about the partnership's efforts to support prison leavers into employment.

The partnership also showcased their work at Charity Mentors Oxfordshire, an University of Oxford panel on 'Working towards an inclusive economy for Oxfordshire', the Oxford SDG Impact Lab discovery day, as a guest speaker at B4 Platinum quarterly breakfast, and a number of other events and fairs across the county.

New website for the OIEP

The OIEP's website launched in late 2023. The website aims to:

- Generate Charter sign-ups through a simple, intuitive user journey.
- Provide a searchable, organised library of useful resources for organisations working towards inclusive economy goals, including toolkits and case studies.
- Amplify the partnership's work in Oxfordshire and the benefits of an inclusive economy.
- Showcase the work of our Charter pledgers towards building a more inclusive economy in the County.
- Collect newsletter sign ups to grow the OIEP's profile and keep stakeholders informed about progress.

OIEP manager and co-chair presenting at B Corp's Louder Than Words festival



Resources

Local authority funding was provided to the Strategic Partnerships team to employ a Partnership Manager and part-cover the cost of communications and democratic services support colleagues.

Amplifying our impact through partnership working

The OIEP's work is made possible by the significant support and in-kind contributions from the organisations above (see *Stakeholders, above*). Senior representatives from a wide array of influential organisations in the County contribute their expertise and influence to the OIEP, unlocking skills, knowledge, and access to business and community networks.

These organisations are committed to working in partnership and OIEP facilitates this in a strategic, coordinated and proactive manner.

Additional in-kind resource is provided through these stakeholders volunteering time and expertise. For example, the OIEP is receiving support from the previous Director of Development for the Oxford University's Faculty of Law in the development of funding strategy and support for OIEP projects.

Financial support from the local authorities has been a key factor in OIEP's success in 23/24, and this report shows that further progress and impact is expected for 24/25. Continued funding is essential to the partnership's success.


Communications and secretariat support

The support received from the Strategic Partnership support team DSO officers and communications coordinator has been incredibly valuable, allowing the OIEP Manager to focus on delivery. The support team has provided secretariat, event management, social media, and internal and external communications, all of which have enhanced the partnership's local and national profile, engagement, progress, and impact.

The communications co-ordinator has established the OIEP branding, social media channels, web presence, and

the new OIEP website (launched Oct 23) which provides a showcase for the partnership, facilitating its knowledge-sharing and advocacy work. They have also produced a suite of branded materials to support the OIEP at recruitment fairs and other events, and support with event delivery including follow-up engagement.

Part of the co-ordinator's role is to leverage resource from partner organisations. They designed the Charter and led on its promotion, providing pledgers with a comms pack to promote the Charter on their own channels. By co-ordinating with the comms teams at the Local Authorities and other partner organisations, the comms co-ordinator is also able to substantially raise the partnership's profile beyond the reach of its own platforms.

The secretariat team plan and deliver OIEP meetings and produce the agendas and minutes for these and help facilitate the organisation and smooth running of the OIEP's stakeholder events. This is vital support in a complex partnership organisation with multiple stakeholders and overlapping workstreams like the OL 

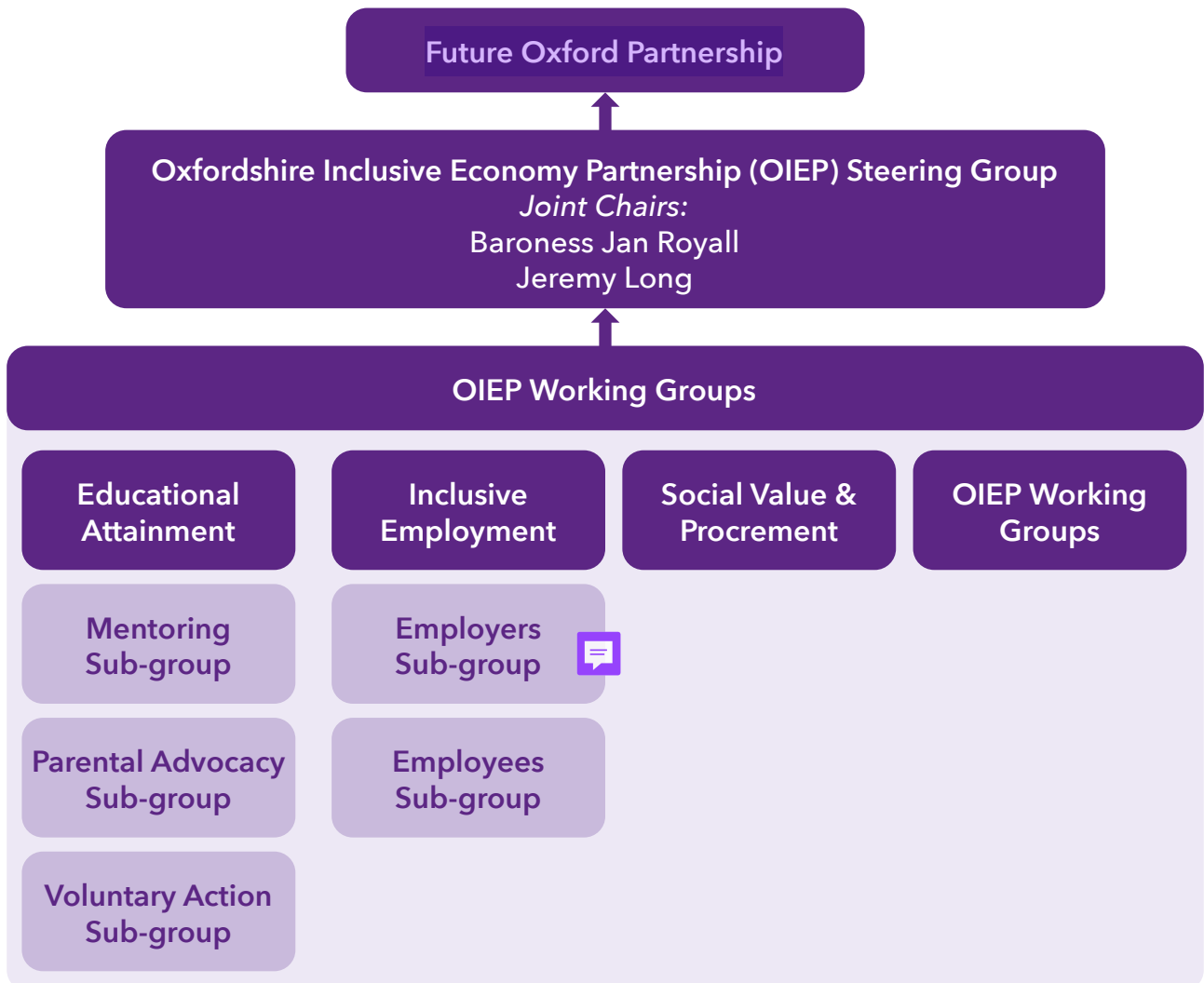


About the OIEP

Structure and governance

The OIEP sits under the umbrella of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and is governed by a Steering Group which is co-chaired by Baroness Jan Royall and Jeremy Long. The core functions of the Steering Group are:

- **Strategic oversight and coordination** - agree longer term inclusive economy aims and a rolling programme of work (1-3 years). Ensure projects and activities are joined up and avoid duplication.
- **Prioritise** – continually review and evaluate activities in the wider political and economic context to ensure effort is best placed.
- **Evaluate** – develop measures of success to monitor the county’s progress towards an inclusive economy.
- **Support** – provide advice and feedback to inclusive economy Working Groups and look to add value wherever possible.
- **Accountability** – ensure written steering group meeting notes are made publicly available and where required report to other stakeholders such as the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
- **Collaborate** – share learning and information across partners.
- **Engage** – look for opportunities to communicate and engage with the community to inform current and future priorities of the OIEP
- **Promote** the OIEP’s aims and ways in which organisations and individuals can make a difference.



Appendix one: Case studies

CASE STUDY: SOCIAL VALUE AND INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT AT FREETHS

Freeths is a leading UK law firm offering a comprehensive range of legal services to individuals and businesses, with their Oxford branch providing expert advice in areas such as corporate law, real estate, and dispute resolution.

They signed the OIEP Charter in May 2023 and have been great advocates for the partnership's mission. They have made a range of pledges to support the local economy and build on their work as inclusive employers.

Since signing the Charter, they have implemented changes to improve their inclusive employment. They have recruited the first two Trainee Solicitors Apprentices into the Oxford office. For these candidates, Freeths pay for their formal education and law degree, and they will be trained "on the job" for six years to qualify as solicitors.

Freeths have also introduced a mentoring scheme which they have publicised within East Oxford through the charity Brilliant Club and their parent power initiative.

The introduction of Trainee Solicitor Apprentice Team allows people to qualify as a solicitor without incurring university debt, making the legal profession more accessible in the county.

Having Trainee Solicitor Apprentices in the Oxford Office has been very good for morale as people can see what a difference it makes to those individuals.

Annie Capstick, trainee solicitor at Freeths: *"I felt a mixture of excitement and determination when I received my Solicitor Apprenticeship. I was delighted that my hard work had paid off. It is a step towards my dreams and a chance to learn and grow in the legal industry. I look forward to progressing in Freeths!"*

Hanan Bayanoni, trainee solicitor at Freeths: *"I was thrilled to secure a solicitor apprenticeship at Freeths. It's an incredible opportunity to begin my legal career at a top law firm at the age of eighteen. The apprenticeship has allowed me to learn from experienced lawyers and work on cases, and I will be able to apply my university studies to my work. It has also allowed me to build a strong professional network and to grow personally and professionally. Earning a salary and not having student debt provides me with financial stability and has enabled me to move out, so I am now living closer to the office."*

Freeths continue to build on their inclusive economy work, including developing a recruitment action plan following a deep dive review of current practices and supporting staff to volunteer at ARCh (Assisted Reading for Children).



CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AT BEARD CONSTRUCTION

Family-owned construction firm Beard has launched a new Social Value Framework, setting out key commitments to communities, people, skills, and the environment to building on their OIEP charter pledges.

WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOUR ORGANISATION INTRODUCED?

We've recently launched our new Social Value Framework, outlining ambitious goals to support communities and invest in people, skills, and the environment. It's a first for our 130-year-old business and reinforces Beard's dedication to deliver meaningful and lasting benefits to enable communities across the south of England to grow and flourish.

We have a number of key ambitions to achieve by 2030, including a £500,000 fundraising drive for charities, creating 30,000 touchpoints to inspire new entrants to the sector, and cutting carbon emissions.

The introduction of our Social Value Framework allows us to measure impact, which will give impetus to our continued investment in communities, local businesses and environmental sustainability.

Mark Beard, Chairman, said: "This remains at the forefront of our work, whilst also opening up exciting new career opportunities for our social value team, who have made commendable progress this year already."

Enabling pathways into the industry and boosting construction skills are a key priority area for us at Beard. It's one that resonates with wider business objectives and industry needs, and where our social value team sees huge potential to elevate our impact.



HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHALLENGES AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

To ensure the Framework is delivered consistently, we have appointed a social value coordinator in each of Beard's five regional offices, supporting Paula Baleson, our Social Value Manager.

This year, Beard colleagues recognised all six of these champions as 'employees of the month' for their efforts in promoting social value.

Mark Beard, Chairman and fourth-generation family member leading the firm, said: *"Creating a better future for the communities from which we draw resources has always been an integral part of how we work. This commitment is shared by our colleagues and supply chain, whose efforts enable us to bring meaningful and lasting value beyond our construction contracts."*

WHAT POSITIVE IMPACT HAS THIS MADE?

One example is our partnership with Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub to produce a 'hard hats, high dreams' video. Featuring interviews with real employees explaining their career journey, the video has been live-streamed to schools in the region. Teachers were able to share questions with Beard colleagues answering in real-time. It has reached around 9,500 primary school aged children and was accessible online through LearnLive to watch back.

We also rolled out a series of unique hoarding designs, putting faces to the variety of people and roles behind successful construction projects and aiming to inspire people to consider a career in construction and broaden perceptions of the industry.





Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership

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